AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (previously presented) A block encoding method, comprising steps of: determining whether an original block of m bits is a $(2N-1)^{st}$ block of m bits, "m" and N being positive integers; and encoding, if the original block of m bits is the $(2N-1)^{st}$ block of m bits, the original block of m bits as an A type weighted block of n bits, having a preselected number of "1" bits and "0" bits and, if otherwise, encoding the original block of m bits as a B type weighted block of n bits, having another pre-selected number of "1" bits and "0" bits where "n" being an odd integer larger than "m", wherein both A type weighted block and its corresponding B type weighted block are combined to form a balance coding block in which the bit number of "1" is equal to that of "0".

2. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the bit number "a" of bit "1" in the A type weighted block of n bits satisfies a relation $2^m < {}_nC_a$, "a" being a positive integer, and the bit number of "1" in the B type weighted block of n bits is given by "n-a".

3. (previously presented) A block decoding method, comprising steps of: determining whether a weighted block of n bits is an A type weighted block of n bits having a preselected number of "1" bits and "0" bits, or a B type weighted block of n bits, having another preselected number of "1" bits and "0" bits, where "n" being an odd integer; and decoding, if the weighted block of n bits is the A type weighted block of n bits, the A type weighted block of n bits as a $(2N-1)^{st}$ original block of m bits and, if otherwise, decoding the B type weighted block of n bits as a $2N^{th}$ original block of m bits, N being a positive integer and "m" being a positive integer smaller than "n", wherein both A type weighted block and its corresponding B type weighted block are combined to form a balance coding block in which the bit number of "1" is equal to that of "0".

4 (original). The method of claim 5, wherein the bit number "a" of "1" in the A type weighted block of n bits satisfies a relation $2^m < {}_nC_a$.

5 (currently amended). A coding/decoding apparatus, comprising: a first buffer for outputting a digitalized image signal on a basis of an original block of m bits and generating a timing signal for notifying when the original block is outputted, "m" being a positive integer; a first control part for determining whether the original block of m bits is a $(2N-1)^{st}$ original block of m bits, based on the timing signal, N being a positive integer; an encoding part for encoding, if the original block of m bits is the $(2N-1)^{st}$ original block of m bits, the original block of ~~n~~ m bits ~~representing~~ as an A type weighted block of n bits having a preselected number of

"1" bits and "0" bits, or a B type weighted block of n bits and, if otherwise, encoding the original block of m bits as a B type weighted block of n bits having another preselected number of "1" bits and "0" bits, where "n" being an odd integer larger than "m", wherein both A type weighted block and its corresponding B type weighted block are combined to form a balance coding block in which the bit number of "1" is equal to that of "0"; a storage medium for storing the encoded block of n bits; a second buffer for outputting the encoded block stored at the storage medium on a basis of n bits and generating a second timing signal for notifying when the encoded block is outputted; a second control part for determining whether the encoded block of n bits is the A type block of n bits based on the second timing signal; and a decoding part for decoding, if the encoded block of n bits is the A type block of n bits, the encoded block of n bits as the $(2N-1)^{st}$ original block of m bits and if otherwise, decoding the weighted block of n bits as the $2N^{th}$ original block of m bits.

6 (original). The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the bit number "a" of bit "1" in the A type weighted block of n bits satisfies a relation $2^m < {}_nC_a$, "a" being a positive integer, and the bit number of "1" in the B type weighted block of n bits is given by "n-a".